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ABSTRACT

Due to Ohio state mandate, recommendations were made regarding minimal competency testing (MCT) in the state, based upon a literature review of legal and measurement issues, as well as data from a survey of school district practices in Cuyahoga County. Factors subject to legal debate include test validity, length of phase-in period, unequal financial allocation, school district liability, and racial discrimination. The measurement technology surrounding standard-setting and design of domain referenced items is only in its infancy. Traditional concepts such as cutting scores, passing scores, and criterion scores are inadequate or at best arbitrary for identifying skill mastery. Implementation problems include: defining MCT, financing, erosion of local control of schools, handling non-promoted students, and making interschool comparisons not warranted by the data. Questionnaire data from 26 school districts in Cuyahoga County showed no consensus about the definition of MCT, its placement in the K-12 sequence, and its value in promotion. It was recommended that any school district implementing MCT publicly distribute a position paper defining the theoretical foundation of the program, the population to be tested, the test development, and the performance standards on which the program is based. Acceptable reliability and validity levels, as well as implications for the students, the curriculum and the community should also be discussed. Tests should be developed by educators in a school district or a group of contiguous districts, and a followup evaluation should be considered. The questionnaire, the responses to the survey, and a 33-item annotated bibiliography are appended. (CP)

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GREATER CLEVELAND INTER-UNIVERSITY CHAPTER

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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF MINIMAL COMPETENCY TESTING IN CUYAHOGA COUNTY-- RESEARCH, PRACTICES AND IMPLICATIONS

- Research Committee -
Greater Cleveland, Ohio Inter-University Chapter
Phi Delta Kappa

May 1978

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Members of the Research Committee of the Greater Cleveland, Ohio Inter-University Chapter, Phi Delta Kappa, contributing to this publication include:

Roseanne Blass
Richard A. Boyd
Daniel D. Drake
Margaret Fleming, Chairperson
Claude W. Gatewood
Lillian R. Hinds
Evelyn M. Johnson
Gerald E. Martau
Harrison J. Means
Marvin A. Pasch
Sister Frances Marchiori, Bibliographic Assistance

FOREWORD

A great deal of public interest in basic skills competencies is evident and continues to grow. Today the educational systems throughout these United States are being subjected to close scrutiny relative to intended or operational programs which are designed to address this issue. Seventy-five per cent of the states in this nation have already introduced, or are considering introducing, minimum competency legislation. Ohio is currently engaged in activities which are directed toward a legislative act. The actions of these states clearly reflect a national trend which will lead to minimum competency expectations and requirements that educational systems be accountable for assuring that individuals meet minimum standards.

The adoption of an approach, structured to adequately consider and fulfill the needs of a school district, will require a high order of priority within the educational program. Although a diversity of educational opportunities is considered a noble goal for society as a whole, parents are really more interested in having school systems bring children to their fullest potential in reading, writing, and arithmetic before they are promoted to the next grade or graduate from high school. Many educators view minimal competency as a level of educational performance sufficient to assure an individual's being able to function in an acceptable and productive manner. This view is congruent with parental concerns.

The Greater Cleveland, Ohio Inter-University Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa is deeply interested in the concept of minimal competency testing. During the past year, as a service to its members and fellow educators, this chapter launched a project to study the competency movement in Cuyahoga

County. The collection and dissemination of accurate information about the status of current trends in connection with the movement were central concerns of the project design. The result of the study is this publication which encompasses research data that relate to present and projected practices within the county. A very significant aspect of this document identifies some implications of the competency movement which, in all probability, will have a substantial impact on educational systems.

The Research Committee has done a skillful job of gathering pertinent information about this important topic of concern. This investigation is certainly worthy of careful analysis by all who would seek fresh data on the competency movement. All of the committee members are to be highly commended for their efforts in connection with this research endeavor, and their desire to provide more service to the field of education through this fraternal organization.

This study could not have been completed without the cooperation of the Greater Cleveland Superintendents' Association. Our chapter is deeply indebted to all the superintendents who participated in the survey.

Daniel D. Drake
President, Greater Cleveland, Ohio
Inter-University Chapter PDK

INTRODUCTION

A powerful reality for school districts in Cuyahoga County is the fact that at least 38 states plus the District of Columbia are in various stages of implementation of minimal competency programs and in many instances, competency testing.[1] This state of affairs, as revealed in the recent Ohio State Department of Education Survey of State Competency Programs, comes in the midst of a blue-ribbon task force's deliberations and public hearings to develop policy recommendations about the future of competency testing in Ohio (School Slate, February 1978).

Phi Delta Kappans of the Greater Cleveland, Ohio Inter-University Chapter, in their varied roles at all levels of the educational enterprise, are vitally concerned about prospects of competency education programs to be mandated in Ohio and particularly in Cuyahoga County. The 'dizzying diversity" of provisions in programs being stipulated throughout the country (Neill 1978) prompts questions about steps underway in development of programs in local school districts where Kappans are bound to be involved.

To determine the status of activities in Cuyahoga County school districts, the Research Committee undertook a survey of superintendents. This publication details the results and discusses implications which have meaning for us all.

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[1]The terms minimum and minimal, as used with competency testing, are interchangeable. They have the same "dictionary definition" and the same meaning in the research literature referred to in this report.

Competency Testing

I. Emerging Issues in the Literature and from Current Practice

National Trends

As in any movement that is largely political and reaches the point of a "band-wagon effect," it is probably safe to say that some have seen minimum competency testing as a simple answer to a complex problem. It is probably equally true to state that some of the early (and even some of the present-day) proponents have failed to determine all of the many implications of minimum competency testing. The purpose of this chapter is to identify the issues emerging from the literature and current practice.

Clamorous public demands for school accountability and return to the "basics" have nourished the competency movement. Impetus for the movement seems to be coming from lay people and legislatures rather than professional educators. Although critics consider the movement as the "Great American Education Fad of the 1970's," advocates describe it as the next major reform movement in American education (Neill 1978).

Nationally the emphasis on competency is in response to widespread dissatisfaction with declining standardized test scores and semi-literate high school graduates. Many explanations have been given for this decline. Some of the more prominent explanations are: (1) television, (2) changes in the American family, (3) the addition of elective courses and a reduction in the number of courses that all students are required to take and (4) diminished attention to mastery of skills and knowledge in the learning process.

In an attempt to hold educators accountable, states and local com-

munities have instituted minimal competency testing programs at a rapid pace. As of April 15, 1976, four states had enacted legislation and four state boards of education had adopted regulations mandating some form of minimal competency testing. By November 15, 1977, eleven states had enacted legislation and twenty state boards had adopted regulations. Activity is occurring in the other nineteen states at the local level, by state department study or legislative hearings.

Pipho (1978) indicated that among the thirty-one states that have taken official action, most seem to agree on the identification of basic skill areas. Virtually all mention reading or communications and mathematics. Florida identifies life skills; Rhode Island lists survival skills. Colorado leaves all identification to the local districts, while California and Florida allow local districts to add subject areas at their discretion. Only Florida and California have enacted legislation that permits early exit from high school. Twenty of the thirty-one states have minimal competency testing standards that will affect regular high school graduation. Grade promotion appears to be tied to minimal competency testing in only four states. Identification of students who need remedial assistance appears to be a common element in much of the state-mandated action. Twenty-one of the thirty-one states mention or imply the concept of remediation.

As this booklet goes to press, an Ohio State Department of Education publication, School Slate (February, 1978) reports thirty-eight states in the stages of implementing or planning competency programs.

Legislators in almost every state have taken action or are studying how to guarantee that students will emerge from schools equipped with minimum proficiency in basic skills (Neill 1978). The rationale underlying the legislation appears to be that requiring states or local school districts to

set minimum standards of performance or to test student proficiency in meeting those standards will produce more competent students. Oregon, as the first state to mandate competency systems, requires all schools to set goals for elementary and secondary education, with failure to do so resulting in loss of state aid. Schools are to provide the opportunity for students to function effectively in six life roles--individual, learner, producer, citizen, consumer and family member. All Oregon districts must assess how well students can read, write and compute. They must devise policies for new graduation requirements, starting in 1978, identifying minimum competencies needed for a diploma. The Denver Public Schools, as one of the first local educational agencies to use minimum competency tests, have tested students in reading, language, spelling and mathematics since 1960. With eight chances to pass beginning in grade nine, where failure rates on the test range from 20 to 35 per cent, only 1.5 per cent fail to receive a diploma due to their inability to pass the tests by the time they are ready to graduate.

A survey of the literature indicates that there are generally two purposes given for competency testing: (1) predicting minimal competency in the adult world, and (2) measuring student's mastery of the school's curriculum. It would appear that at least two different meanings are being given to the word competency: (1) application of classroom learning in situations that simulate real life and (2) an acceptable level of performance in a "basic skill" area.

Until recently most of the literature dealing with minimal competency testing dealt with descriptions of various programs or a discussion of trends. Recently, however, articles have appeared raising serious questions such as:

1. Do competency testing programs discriminate against students?

2. Do minimal competency tests provide a valid measure of performance?

3. Will minimal competency levels serve as maximal performance goals for teachers and students?

4. Will a competency testing program result in the slighting or elimination from the curriculum of the arts, humanities and science?

Minimal Competency Testing in Ohio

On April 4, 1977, Ohio's Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Franklin B. Walter, appointed a Department-wide Task Force on Minimal Competency Expectations. The charge of the task force was to examine performance-based programs for the purpose of making recommendations for actions in Ohio.

The Department of Education Task Force studied various resources and conducted a survey on minimal competency programs in other states. One purpose of the survey was to gather information about requirements for early entrance to school, provisions which would permit students to graduate before completion of twelve years of school. In addition, the survey attempted to determine which methods have been used to help students who do not meet the minimums. The Task Force completed their survey in the fall of 1977.

In August, 1977, the Ohio General Assembly mandated that State Assessment Advisory Committee make recommendations by July 1, 1978, for a minimal competency examination for the promotion of all pupils to grades five and nine and for graduation from high school.

The State Board of Education at its January 1978, meeting directed the Department of Education, in cooperation with the Assessment Advisory Committee, to conduct a series of public forums to seek recommendations from parents, teachers, administrators and school board members pertaining to

minimal competencies for consideration at their June 12 meeting. The following questions were established as a guide to public comments.

1. What should students be able to do?
2. How well should students be able to perform?
3. How do we know what students can do?
4. When and how often should competencies be measured?
5. What will be done for students who do not meet standards?
6. What is the impact on students?
7. What is the impact on school? Community?
8. Who is responsible?

At the time this report is being written these forums are taking place. Thus, the direction the State of Ohio will take on the minimal competency issue is not known at this time. However, it is expected that both the State Board of Education and the Legislature will establish a position on the issue before September, 1978.

Legality Issues

Obviously, the assumption behind a competency test is that it measures what has been taught. If this is not true, then a student (or his parents) probably has the legal right to challenge the validity of the test.

In February of this year, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Miami, Florida, announced that it may file suit against state or local educators, charging that Florida's new competency test is discriminatory. This followed the announcement of the results of the functional literacy test administered in October, in which a disproportionate number of black high school juniors had failed to achieve the minimum level required for graduation.

Paul Tractenberg (1977) examined various constitutional, statutory and common law theories that may be used to challenge minimal competency standards adopted by states. He indicated that the most probable basis for challenge will be the equal protection and due process clauses of federal and state constitutions. Test validity, length of phase-in period, unequal allocation of educational dollars, and school district liability are factors which seem to be most subject to legal issues.

McClung (1978) discussed the problems involved with the validity of minimum competency tests. He has identified three types:

a) Curricular validity--Was the curriculum designed to teach functional competency? If not, it would be unfair to deny individual students their diplomas because they did not learn to be functionally competent.

b) Instructional validity--Even if functional competency was built into the curriculum, were the school district's objectives translated into topics actually taught in the classrooms?

c) Content validity--Do the test items represent the performance domain that the test purports to measure? This last type of validity, by the way, may have little to do with the first two.

In general, two types of competency tests are being used or are being considered across our nation: (1) those used to measure the student's mastery of the school's curriculum and (2) those used to measure the minimal competence needed in the adult world. It would appear that schools will be on far shakier legal ground in the second instance than in the first. Several studies have indicated the difficulty of trying to predict adult success, both on the job and in daily living, from results of achievement tests or from grades achieved in high school. The denial of a high school diploma based on such a test would seem to be fraught with the possibility of legal suits being filed.

An additional legal implication has to do with the matter of the length of the phase-in period for a program of minimum competency testing. Particularly, if the granting of the high school diploma is based upon the passing of a test, students might well make the argument that such a requirement was imposed far too late in their schooling. It is indeed likely that, with such a requirement, teachers might have taught differently and students might have studied differently.

Still another legal possibility arises from the problem in most states of unequal allocation of educational dollars. Given the fact that, in Ohio, for example, one district last year spent $3,667 for each of its pupils, while another had only $842 to spend, would it not be possible for the students and parents of low-spending districts to make the claim that the resources available in their schools were so low as to preclude, or at least diminish, the chance of reaching the minimum levels expected?

To this point, we have been discussing the legal implications of the test itself. However, there is another legal implication, this having to do with the matter of liability of the school district if a student fails to achieve the prescribed minimum level on a competency test.

Until a few years ago, educational malpractice suits were unknown. Then, beginning with the Peter Doe case in San Francisco, there have been lawsuits, filed by either students or their parents, charging school districts and their personnel with failure to properly educate the student. Although no case has yet been decided in favor of the plaintiff, it is probably only a matter of time until such a thing happens. The widespread implementation of minimal competency tests seems likely to hasten that day.

Measurement Issues

In an address before the College Entrance Examination Board Annual Meeting on October 24, 1977, Joseph A. Califano, Jr., Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, pointed out some of the critical limitations and dangers of testing.

> First, like other methods of assessing educational achievement, tests are far from perfect. The beguiling precision of test scores disguises many difficult questions about what tests measure and how well they succeed. Tests are tools--not magic wands. Even with the most sophisticated tests, the assessment of learning will still require sensitive judgments about a child's human development; tests can help inform such judgments; tests cannot make them.
>
> Second, there is the issue of cultural bias. Tests can prove especially difficult for particular groups of children....
>
> The third basic limitation on the use of tests is that they measure progress toward but a few of the myriad goals we ask our schools to pursue. Not all skills are basic skills; in focusing on minimal competency we cannot let the minimum become the maximum. We must ensure that students of ability are given the chance to develop to the fullest, and that important subjects beyond the three R's are not overlooked....

The CAPT Newsletter, November, 1977, further cautioned that applied performance tests should be used with the same concern for reliability, validity and objectivity that apply to any test. CAPT (1977) was especially concerned about the content as well as curricular or instructional validity of minimal competency tests. Content validity refers to the degree to which test content is representative of course content and instructional objectives. It was emphasized that a competency test measuring life-skills and used as a basis for denying a diploma when such skills were never taught in the school is arguably so arbitrary as to violate due process of law.

One of the most critical challenges in the rush to board the "competency" bandwagon has been the need to apply a measurement technology and appropriate instrumentation with dispatch. Yet, the present state of

measurement arts related to educational testing may simply not be up to the task. Among the voluminous contemporary literature discussing competency testing, Spady (1977) notes that the "technology surrounding the assessment and measurement of success in life role activities is only in its infancy, even though the rush toward adopting competency based education-like programs is upon us." In one of the most comprehensive discussions of this pressing problem for measurement specialists, Hambleton and his associates (1978) emphasize that the desire of many individuals, organizations and agencies "to use criterion-referenced tests has far outrun the profession's ability to produce test development standards and high quality instruments to meet this need." Hambleton considers that there has been extensive activity in constructing criterion-referenced tests, a subset of which includes competency tests. The principles utilized have been "confusing, contradictory and massive." All the while, the necessity to grapple with issues such as test score validity and determination of cut-off scores in the midst of complicated legal actions by the courts have produced a "highly unsettled and volatile situation." (Hambleton 1978).

Although Hambleton's group considers that there is now an established body of appropriate theory and guidelines to attempt the jobs demanded, it raises several "iffy" problems which are of considerable concern to the thinking educator. Two of these problems involve the determination of the mastery level and the development of a set of test items which represent an appropriate basis for estimating the test taker's status.

Glass (1977) has authored a land-mark paper which examines the "standards" question related to competency testing. "Setting standards or mastery levels," he writes, "is frequently written about as though it is a well-established and routine phase of instructional development. In conversations with measurement specialists and instructional development

experts over the past few years, I have been literally dumbfounded by the nonchalance with which they handle the standards problem." Most of the language of performance standards according to Glass is "pseudoquantification." This, is his opinion, represents a meaningless application of numbers to a question not prepared for quantitative analysis.

The Glass paper traces the evolution of "criterion-referenced testing" from the first use of the concept by Glaser in the early sixties which called for the making of scores informative about behavior rather than merely about relative performance on poorly specified and vaguely known dimensions. Concurrently, Mager's development of the idea of behavioral objectives which included minimal performance standards and Popham's amalgamation of the "Glaser-Mager notions" produced the belief that criterion-referenced tests could carry with them performance standards or cut-off scores, if you will, indicating mastery. The Glass paper maintains that Glaser had intended that the term "criterion" which crept into the process would be a measurement scale in the classic psychometric sense. Its use was to be in validation of the test from observation or recording of behavior which the psychometric instrument was to predict. For example, as Glass explains, "the test could be performance on a form board, and the criterion, an evaluation of employees' speed and accuracy in operating a cash register." What has occurred, in his opinion, is a premature translation of a "tentative notion--one that must wait for the development of a more sophisticated instructional and learning psychology--into the idea of 'cut-off scores' and 'mastery levels.' " Glass makes it clear that he is raising an objection to the notion of cut-off scores for criterion-referenced tests and not "domain referenced testing" which he views as including tests with a representative set of items from a clearly defined domain of behaviors.

The Glass paper contributes a concise overview of six classes of techniques for determining the criterion score on a criterion-referenced test. These include:

"1. Performance of Others;

2. 'Counting Backwards from 100 per cent';

3. Bootstrapping on Other Criterion Scores;

4. Judging Minimal Competence;

5. Decision-Theoretic Approaches;

6. Operations Research' Methods."

Glass considers his first class of techniques, using the performance of others to establish the criterion level, as mildly embarrassing to the proponents of criterion-referenced test proponents who have tried to build their house by tearing down that of the norm-referenced testers. He cites the California High School Proficiency Examination, which utilized the 50th percentile of graduating seniors as constituting the criterion score. The criterion was determined normatively to determine whether students above age 16 could be certified and released from high school. An additional example is to be found in the senior year examination in Arizona which established a proficiency level equal to the median score earned by ninth graders in September, or a 9.0 grade equivalent unit.

In his second class of techniques, Glass describes "counting backwards from 100 per cent" as having involved an objective being stated, a test item written to correspond to it, and then arbitrary judgments about desired performance levels. "Where one stops counting (e.g., at 99 per cent or 95 per cent or 80 per cent)," Glass argues, "manifestly controls the per cent deemed to have reached the criterion." And the difference, he maintains, between failing 5 per cent and failing 25 per cent of the pupils may be crucial; and if so, it ought not to be decided by a judgmental process

so subject to whim and idiosyncrasy as this one.

In his third category of "bootstrapping on other criterion scores," Glass sees the establishment of a criterion score through studying the distribution of scores of candidates who successfully achieved certification in the particular area under study. Contrary to popular belief, Glass notes that in such situations as civil service tests, licensing examinations and the like, there are no "pass" scores, rather, the candidates are examined, their scores ranked, and all available jobs filled counting down from the top of the list of examinees. Such cut-off points have virtually nothing to do with defensible judgments of competency vs. incompetency.

When a "judging minimal competence" approach is utilized, Glass sees experts studying a test or an item and then declaring that a "minimally competent" persons should score "such and so." This is the direction taken in legislation in Oregon and New Jersey, according to Glass. Two approaches in this area have been offered by Nedelsky (1954) and Ebel (1972). Glass cites results of an empirical comparison of these methods carried out by Andrews and Hecht (1976) which revealed an enormous discrepancy between the methods. Glass questions whether "judges or experts" can recognize the highest level of skill below which a person will not be able to succeed in life, at the next level of schooling or in his chosen trade. He sees the attempt to base criterion scores on a concept of minimal competence failing because it has virtually no foundation in psychology and when its arbitrariness is granted, but judges attempt, nonetheless, to specify minimal competence, they disagree wildly.

In considering the application of "decision-theoretic approaches" Glass feels that all of those who have dealt statistically and psychometrically with the problems of criterion-referenced testing" are guilty of

misdirected precision and axiomatization." At the bottom of it all, the basic decisions to pass a certain percentage is judgmental, capricious and essentially unexamined. "How is one criterion score justified over another?" asks Glass.

Finally, in examining the sixth possible approach, Glass cites the arbitrariness of establishing criterion scores despite the illusion of the approach of operations research in establishing optimal levels.

Emrich (1971) has espoused the distressing arbitrariness of setting standards by existing methods:

> It is not difficult to show that the traditional measurement procedures are inadequate, or at best arbitrary as a method of identifying student skill mastery. For example, using criterion-referenced procedures IPI has suggested an 85 per cent correct minimum as a mastery criteria for any skill test (of which there are over 400). Although this criteria does have intuitive appeal, there is no convenient analytical or empirical justification for it. Just as various skills may differ in level of difficulty in terms of mastery, so also might the optimal performance criteria in the test situation vary. It may easily be that for some skills, a test score of 60 per cent is indicative of mastery, whereas for others--a score of 90 per cent or higher would be required. In short, the issue is not whether a criterion-referenced testing procedure is or is not appropriate to IPI, but rather how and at what level each criterion should be set.

Glass maintains that interpretations and decisions based on absolute levels of performance on exercises will be largely meaningless, since these absolute levels vary unaccountably with exercise content and difficulty, since judges will disagree widely on the question of what consequences ought to ensure from the same absolute level of performance and since there is no way to relate absolute levels of performance on exercises to success on the job, at higher levels of schooling, or in life. According to Glass, setting performance standards on tests and exercises by known methods is a waste of time or worse.

Zieky and Livingston (1977) also address the methods of setting

standards for assessment tests in reading, writing and mathematics. Identifying "passing scores," "cutting scores" and "mastery scores" as other names for standards, they see little difficulty in attempting to decide whether or not a certain score indicates that a student has mastered the content measured by a test. They recognize the possible erroneous assumptions in such a process in noting:

> Setting standards would not be a problem if students who have mastered the content measured by a test would always answer all the test questions correctly and if students who have not mastered the content would all get scores of zero. But in the real world of teaching and testing, we rarely get such clear-cut results. We have to face the difficult task of deciding where to draw the line or how much is enough.

In the technique of standards-setting, they note that there is a large gap between theory and practice. They view the field of decision theory as having developed elaborate solutions to the problem of setting standards, which may be considered as theoretically sound, but which are not used very often because they require data that are hard to get. The method with the least theoretical justification is the one most often used in practice--the arbitrary choice of a fixed percent-correct as the standard, without regard to the length, difficulty, or importance of the test.

Zieky and Livingston cite seven issues as critical to standards-setting:

1) Standards should be viewed as commitments.

2) Standards should be viewed as minimums.

3) Standards should be viewed as the results of a process which includes representatives of both sexes as well as racial, ethnic and cultural minorities and which is well-publicized.

4) Standards should be viewed as tentative estimates, which may require change over time.

5) Standards should be realistic estimates which are compared to follow-up data, school records, community information about graduates, and validity checks with adult populations.

6) Standards should not be over-generalized.

7) Setting standards should not be hurried.

Featured in the Zieky and Livingston paper are four methods for setting standards--the Nedelsky method, the Angoff method, the Borderline-Group method and the Contrasting Group method. They recommend applying more than one method to the same test and averaging the results of two or more methods to help set the standard.

Zieky and Livingston note that setting standards is a controversial task. Very little published information about the actual experiences of school districts in setting standards has been published. Their paper seems to give token acknowledgement to the problems identified by Glass.

A second critical challenge for developers of competency tests will be the design of items that reflect the domain they are to measure. Hambleton and his associates (1978) identify two general approaches that may be used to establish the content validity of the test items. The first approach involves judgments of test items by content specialists and determination of the agreement among the specialists that a set of items adequately samples a particular content area, or domain. A second approach is to employ empirical techniques such as discrimination indices which may provide useful information for detecting bad items.

Hambleton and his associates consider that item statistics should not be used in item selection since such a strategy introduces a "bias" that can reduce the validity of scores derived from such a test. It remains for someone to produce operational procedures for test developers to use both types of information, subjective and empirical.

Traditional testing procedures are considered to be limited in usefulness for criterion-referenced measurement. A growing interest in developing valid and reliable item banks in all school subjects had generated attempts to utilize the RASCH test model. Forster (1976) emphasizes that the RASCH model makes it possible to break the items free from the test in which they appear and to relate them to a more general curriculum based scale (latent trait scale). But the RASCH approach does not preclude the critical need for specifying curriculum and checking the content specification for each item. Whatever the model applied to criterion-referenced procedures, a basic problem will be whether or not the test items can represent a basis for estimating the test taker's correct score as if all items in the population of items measuring the domain were administered.

As Hambleton and his associates (1978) caution, the allocation to students of mastery states poses the probability of "false positive errors" where students are moved ahead but really have not mastered the skill as well as the "false-negative errors" where students are held back but really have mastered the skill.

II. Implementation Issues
Setting a Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework

Spady (1977) views competency based education as a "bandwagon in search of a definition." "And like most self-respecting fads in American education over the past few decades," Spady indicates "the competency based education bandwagon cannot be accused of having put its conceptual house in order before launching on its uncharted parade route and accumulating a vast and lively following." Basic definitions, conceptual clarity and analyses

of the organizational and social implications of various CBE approaches are badly needed. Crucial to the definition of CBE, in Spady's opinion, is delineation of six elements: outcomes, time, instruction, measurement, certification and program adaptability.

When one examines the term, "minimum competency testing," the first two words call for further scrutiny. Just what is "minimum competency"?

Obviously, in establishing the minimum score which will be acceptable, someone (teacher, school, school district, state legislature, state department of education) must establish a "cut-off" point. In examining practices in some of those places where minimum competency testing has been instituted, one finds that this cut-off point is usually a percentage figure, and it appears to have been established in an arbitrary fashion. In Palm Beach County, Florida, for example, the school system decided to administer the Adult Level Performance (ALP) test to all eleventh graders, and to require a passing score of 70 per cent before a diploma would be granted. The test was administered on a pilot basis in 1976, and when the results were in, it was found that 22 per cent of the students taking the test would have to improve their performance or they would not receive diplomas. It was further found that the failure rate for black students was 56.5 per cent. As a result, the school system has now lowered the cut-off point to 60 per cent. The purpose of citing the case in this particular school district is to illustrate that "competency" can be whatever those in authority determine it to be. If too few students fail the test, the hurdle can be raised; if too few students pass the test, the hurdle can be lowered.

It bothers some, for example, that many school systems have chosen a reading proficiency level of eighth grade as the requirement for graduation. Depending upon one's point of view, that figure is either too low or too high. For the parent whose child is already reading at a level equal to college

graduates, an eighth grade level would seem atrociously low. Given the estimated reading level of our adult population, eighth grade proficiency is probably defensible. The point is that it can be set at any point.

With non-promotion or the denial of a diploma at stake, the cut-off point, however arbitrarily affixed, becomes a life-or-death matter.

Brickell (1977) has identified seven policy questions that form a conceptual framework for considering minimal competency testing. Brickell's list includes:

1. What competencies?

    ____ Basic skills
    ____ School subjects
    ____ Life areas
    ____ Basic skills applied in school subjects
    ____ Basic skills applied in life areas

2. How measured?

    ____ Actual performance situations
    ____ Simulated performance situations
    ____ School products and performances
    ____ Paper and pencil tests

3. When measured?

    ____ During school
    ____ At the end of school

4. One minimum or many?

    ____ Single standard for all
    ____ Graduated standards according to:
        ____ Ability
        ____ Family background
    ____ Differentiated standards according to:
        ____ Special talents
        ____ Special interests

5. How high the minimum?

    ____ Based on actual test performance of successful adults
    ____ Based on judgments by informed adults
    ____ Accepted failure rate on first testing:
        ____ 1 per cent
        ____ 3 " "
        ____ 5 " "
        ____ 10 " "
        ____ 15 " "
        ____ 20 " "

6. For schools or students?

____ Schools
____ Students

7. What about incompetents?

Schools	Students	Treatment
____	____	Verify Findings
____	____	Given more chances to pass
____	____	Lower standard
____	____	Redesign programs-Remediate students
____	____	Stop operations/Stop advancement
____	____	Refuse accreditation/Refuse diploma

Although Brickell's (1977) discussion raised additional thought-provoking questions which do not yield to simple answers, he did provide the following recommendations:

1. Begin by distinguishing between school skills and life skills, between the skills it takes to get by in school and the skills it takes to get by in life, between those needed to succeed later in school and those needed to succeed later in life.

2. Use simulated performance situations to test life skills; use paper and pencil to test school skills.

3. Measure school skills during school to decide promotion from grade to grade. Measure life skills at the end of school to determine graduation.

4. Choose a passing score, make a pilot study with tests, see how many students fail and decide whether to raise the students or lower the tests.

5. Determine whether you will measure students or schools; whether you will write test items all students can pass or only most students can pass; whether you will test everybody or only a sample; whether you will report results to each individual parent or only to the general public.

6. Whether you are requiring each student to be competent or each school to make a majority of its students competent, you can check the findings, give another chance to succeed, lower standards, modify the program, insist they meet standards before continuing, or let them go on but advertise their shortcomings to oursiders.

Cost

Because minimum competency testing is still in its infancy, it is difficult to ascertain the costs of such programs. However, it is probably fair to say that, leaving test development costs aside, the cost to school districts of the tests themselves will be minimal. This is mainly due to the fact that most school districts already do a great deal of testing, and it is likely that any new minimum competency tests will simply take the place of certain existing tests.

Test development costs can be considerable, as Anderson (1977) has demonstrated in a research study. Anderson found that the cost for the development of each test item averages about $100. Assuming that measurement takes place once each at grades 5, 9 and 12, for example, the cost will run between $15,000 and $63,000, depending upon how many "spare" items are developed. This is not a large cost if a test is developed for an entire state, but it is a substantial cost if a relatively small district attempts to develop its own test.

Nor should it be assumed that this is a one-time cost. Tests must be revised yearly in order to keep them current, reasonably well protected from cheating, and free of defective items.

The real costs of testing, however, lie not in the tests themselves, but in the remediation or compensatory education that must necessarily accompany their use. Even now, most school districts have identified through their present testing programs those students who are having difficulty. The problem has been finding the money and the proper techniques to provide remediation for those who have the deficiencies.

The state of Washington has estimated that it would require 86 to 94 million dollars to provide the remediation needed for that state's

students in reading and mathematics. New Jersey expects to see its bill for compensatory programs rise from 30 million dollars in 1976-77 to $70 million in 1978-79. (Anderson, 1977). The state of Florida recently allocated $10 million to fund intensive tutoring this spring and summer for those students needing it. The Florida legislature has also promised $26.5 million for remedial education next year.

CONTROL

One hears much these days about citizen complaints that they are "losing control" of their schools. With each passing court decision and legislative (both state and national) mandate, citizens perceive their additional erosion of local control. While one could argue that courts and legislative assemblies have often stepped in to fill voids caused by the inaction of local officials, this does little to alleviate the public's discomfort over loss of control.

Minimal competency testing, whether or not it is worthwhile, will increase the centralization of public schools if the competency tests are designed to be identical statewide. If local districts are given the freedom to set their own instructional goals, and then design tests with performance indicators which measure those goals and student competencies, then a measure of local control will be maintained, but costs would rise meteorically.

Over the years, authorities have spoken to both sides of the matter of a statewide or national curriculum. Some would argue that such curricula would be dangerous from the standpoint of the erosion of local control by citizens of their schools. Others take the stand that, given our mobile population, today's citizen of Cincinnati may be tomorrow's resident of Cleveland or Seattle, and he should be equally competent wherever he finds himself. It is not the purpose here to argue the merits of either point

of view; it is important, however, to point out that national or statewide minimum competency tests are likely to lead to a national or statewide curriculum. Today, most states are looking only at mandated tests in reading, mathematics or writing. But who is to say that tomorrow will not bring competency tests in other subject areas? Each succeeding step in that direction would bring about the national curriculum which many would deplore.

FAILURES

It is ironic that, while the demand for competency testing was in large measure brought about by the publicity surrounding the drop in scores of students taking college entrance examinations, probably not one student from that segment of our schools will be hindered by a competency test. Rather, it will be the marginal student who will be affected.

A countless number of research studies have shown that there is a strong and direct correlation between the socioeconomic status of a student and his achievement in school. Given this fact, Cawelti (1978) recently made this statement:

> "The results of this 'reform' (minimum competency testing) are predictable: our tests will discover that the poor, the culturally disadvantaged, the malnourished, and the emotionally disturbed children of our cities and towns do not learn as well as we would like. We will label them as 'failures' once again, consign them to 'remedial' classes and deprive them of diplomas. It is difficult to envision how either children or the nation will benefit from this misconceived venture."

Most minimum competency testing programs call for "stops" at one or both of two levels: (1) non-promotion in grades K-6 or K-8, and (2) denial of the high school diploma. There are important implications connected to each.

(1) Non-promotion. Critics of the public schools claim that what they perceive to be the school's deficiencies can be attributed to leniency. One form of leniency which they point to is the so-called practice of "social promotion." Some school systems have gained publicity recently by announcing that, henceforth, they would promote students from one grade to the next only after those students had shown proficiency on a test.

Would setting up such a hurdle cause students to be competent? A study by Jackson (1975) reviewed 44 studies which had been done on the subject of promotion versus retention, and he concluded the following:

> "There is no reliable evidence to indicate that grade retention is more beneficial than grade promotion with students with serious academic or adjustment difficulties....; thus, those educators who retain students in a grade do so without valid research evidence to indicate that such treatment will provide greater benefits to students with academic or adjustment difficulties than will promotion to the next grade."

(2) Denial of the High School Diploma. One implication of the denial of a regular diploma to the student who fails to achieve the minimum level on a competency test is that such a student should probably receive some kind of certificate. The bestowal of an alternate certificate would at least give some measure of credit to a student who had persevered through a specified number of years of schooling. It could also serve as a tangible indication to a future employer of such attendance on the part of the student.

Beyond that, however, there is a larger implication of just what are the future options open to the student who has not achieved the minimum level required for a diploma. Ohio legislators, for example, have in the past had to deal with the request by higher education institutions to deny automatic enrollment in Ohio colleges and universities to those who had not achieved at a "satisfactory" level in high school. These legislators have

always denied such requests, and their decision has usually been based upon the rationale that, in a free society, anyone should have the opportunity to improve his lot in life despite his performance in the past. This is a position to be applauded, and not one which should be discarded without a great deal of thought.

The denial of a diploma based upon failure to pass a competency test, however, opens up this matter again, and this time from a different perspective. It is difficult to see how a state legislature could on one hand call for the denial of the diploma to those who are not competent, and then on the other hand maintain that the state's colleges and universities are open to anyone. An alternate structure of certification will be called for.

Setting Standards

Minimum standards are always standards of adequacy, never of excellence. As a result, there are those who fear that the average and above-average student will be lulled into complacency by the implication of minimum competency tests.

Green (1978) pointed out the implications of this matter when he made this statement recently:

> "What one community will regard as minimally satisfactory, another may regard as quite beyond what is necessary and far beyond what is within reach, and still others may regard as quite within the realm of disaster. Not only does the threshold of failure change through time, but it will also differ, no doubt, from one community to another. It is the state's prerogative to assure performance of the barest functions of the system. But the barest functions of the system are defined by what is already demonstrably achievable. Therefore, lest insurmountable political problems are created, the minimum standards that the state established are unlikely to greatly exceed the settled expectations that prevail in that community with the lowest achievements. Minimum standards, in short, are likely to be lower than those that would be and are already established by the vast majority of the communities in the state."

What must be recognized is that there is a substantial difference between minimum standards and excellence.

Curriculum Implications

Amitai Etzioni once pointed out that "those things which get done in an organization are those things which are measured." It is for this very reason that proponents and practitioners of such subjects as art, music and physical education are casting a wary eye at minimum competency testing. They see it as a threat to the very existence of the arts and other subjects in the public schools.

It is fair to say that the competency testing movement and the "back to basics" proponents are parts of the same mix. As a result, those who favor the inclusion of the arts and other subjects in the curriculum have recently been stressing the point that their subjects are also "basic" to a child's proper education.

If the squeaky wheel does indeed receive the grease, then one strong implication for educators as they contemplate the competency testing movement is the proper emphasis in the school day of the "non-basic" subjects. Although minimum competency testing suggests concern for a range of skills, it in fact, is being used as a "shorthand" for reading, writing and arithmetic.

Exceptional Children

Probably the biggest single problem with which schools have had to cope this year is that of proper implementation of the new federal laws regarding education of handicapped students. How to evaluate properly the minimum competency of such students adds another difficult dimension.

One approach, of course, would be to exempt certain handicapped

students, and those foreign born students who are having difficulty with the English language, from the requirements for minimum competency testing. One problem with this approach, however, is that these students, as graduates of high schools, will be expected to have the same competencies as those who received diplomas as a result of having passed a competency test. McClung and Pullin (1978) have suggested another macabre possibility in such an approach, that being the likelihood that "borderline" students and their parents will seek out a special education classification as a "handicapped" person in order to qualify for the exemption. Given the fuzzy line between handicapped and non-handicapped children, particularly in the area of learning disabilities, this is a strong possibility.

McClung and Pullin have suggested three possible routes for schools to take regarding minimum competencies and handicapped students:

(1) Use the same standards and grant the same diploma.

(2) Use different standards, but grant the same diploma.

(3) Use different standards and a different diploma.

Each of these routes entails problems, either for the handicapped students themselves or for the expectations which others hold for them.

INTERSCHOOL COMPARISONS

One of the most dangerous implications which can arise from minimum competency testing is the danger of some persons attempting to use the results to compare schools and school districts in ways not warranted by the data.

It has already been pointed out here that one can predict that, based on past research, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds will generally not perform as well on competency tests as those from more advantageous environments. Thus, it would be unfair as well as meaningless to

try to compare schools within a district or one school system with another. Nevertheless, we can assume that just such an attempt will be made. We already have examples in the Cleveland area of a newspaper printing, either maliciously or neutrally, distorted stories of test results in schools.

While most of us would agree that competition can be a healthy form of motivation to prod each of us to perform at a higher level, competition in the testing area is both unfair and unhealthy for both teachers and students. If teachers find that they are going to be measured on the basis of their students' performances on competency tests, the results of which are likely to be compared with others and publicized, then we need restate a point made earlier in this paper, namely, that "what gets done is that which is measured." We can assume that teachers, being rational persons, will soon begin to devote their time to teaching those things which are covered on the competency test, probably reading, writing and mathematics. Further, it is likely that we will revert to the old practice which was once prevalent in Ohio schools in the heyday of the "every-pupil tests"; during that era, teachers hoarded copies of previous tests and then "taught to the test". While that practice is virtually guaranteed to cause higher performance on a test, it is certainly no guarantee that the child will be any better educated.

If minimal competency tests are to become standard practice, then every attempt should be made to prevent their use for comparative purposes. The avowed purpose of the test should be preserved in practice: as a tool to determine the competencies and shortcomings of individual students.

Current Practice Trends in Cuyahoga County

Introduction

The Greater Cleveland Inter-University Council Research Committee distributed a questionnaire on competency testing to thirty-two Cuyahoga County school districts. The questionnaire attempted to collect data about the number of school districts involved in competency testing. In addition, the nature of the involvement or intention to become involved was explored. Twenty-six (81 per cent) of the thirty-two responded. The narrative that follows is a report and synthesis of the data. The questionnaire and tallies from the data are in an appendix following the report.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed and validated by the Research Committee. It contained 19 questions. Some of the questions were objective in nature and others were open ended to allow for "free" response. Except for question number one, the questions were written in two forms. The first form was for those districts not currently engaged in competency testing programs. The second form used parallel questions written for districts who are presently engaged in such programs.

The Report

The format for the report is as follows. The data will be presented with involved districts first and uninvolved districts second for each item. Where appropriate, a synthesis for each item will follow the two data reports.

Item 1 N=26

The item attempts to determine "involvement" in minimum competency testing (MCT) Seventeen school districts were studying the issues before de-

ciding about implementation. Five were not involved at all. Two were involved in phasing in MCT. One is planning a program for implementation, and one is administering a program this year.

Synthesis 1

It appears that of the 26 respondents 80 per cent are involved in MCT in some way, and the remaining 20 per cent are not involved. Note that phrases "involved in" in this item and "engaged in" in the following items have different meanings. "Engaged in" refers to those four (4) respondents who are planning, phasing in, or administering an MCT program.

Item 2

This item allows each respondent more than one response and attempts to determine the purpose of MCT programs. The districts engaged in competency testing (N=4) report that their purposes are mainly to identify needs of pupils and schools (R=3). In addition, they want to: respond to public demand for accountability (R=2), demonstrate student attainment to the public (R=1), assess district proficiency in equipping students with minimal skills (R=1), and assess the effectiveness of the program (R=1).

One respondent took advantage of the open response option and wrote that his purpose was "to insure that student's achievement in English and math is commensurate with...ability."

The districts <u>not</u> engaged in MCT (N=22) emphasize three potential purposes: assess effectiveness of instructional program (R=22), assessment of how well district and schools are equipping students with minimum skills (R=19), identify needs of pupils and schools (R=19), respond to public demand for accountability (R=11), and, demonstrate attainment of measureable outcomes of public schooling (R=11).

Synthesis 2

Comparisons are difficult because of the large difference of the size of N, but apparently the group not engaged in MCT has more purposes in mind than those who are engaged, and emphasises three rather than two purposes.

Item 3

The purpose of this item was to determine at what grade(s) the tests would be given. Those districts engaged in MCT (N=4) indicated they would give it in grade 4, grade 7, and also in grades 8-12, with grades 8 and 10 receiving most emphasis (R=3, respectively.

Those districts not engaged in MCT (N=22) indicated they would give it in grade 8 (R=15), and in grades 1-12 with varying responses.

Synthesis 3

Comparisons are difficult because of the large difference in the size of N, but apparently the group not engaged in MCT would give the test at more grade levels than the group presently engaged in giving such tests. The group not engaged would give them at every grade level except K. Whereas, the group presently engaged emphasized grades 8 and 10.

Item 4

Item four attempts to find out what kind of test (more than one response was allowed) would be used in MCT by the school districts. Those districts engaged in MCT (N=4) had a majority of responses (R=3), saying they would select tests measuring basic skills such as reading and computation. One respondent indicated aptitude and achievement tests in subject matter would be used.

Those districts not engaged in MCT (N=22) gave a majority (R=19) to basic skills tests, a distant second (R=14) to life role tests, and a

distant third (R=8) to subject matter tests.

Synthesis 4

Both groups gave a majority response to tests measuring basic skills.

Item 5

This item was open response in form and sought to identify commercially published tests that are or might be used for MCT. Those districts engaged in MCT (N=4) indicated the tests listed: Adult Performance Test ACT, Reading Achievement Test, Metropolitan Achievement, Otis, Lennon Mental Ability Tests. (Grade 8), Ohio Survey (Grade 10). Those districts not engaged in MCT indicated that five respondents were unsure about the tests to be used. The other respondents mentioned numerous tests such as: Basic Skills, Assessment offered by Educational Testing Service, the SHARP Test from CTB McGraw-Hill.

Synthesis 5

The results from items 4 and 5 should, logically, have some consistency in response. In general they do not because though the respondents said in item 4 they wanted tests measuring basic skills, they did not select tests which would do that. One might safely infer that the respondents appear to be unable to select tests to measure what they want to measure.

Item 6

This item allowed only a yes or no response to the question, "Was (Would) your commercial test(be)developed on the basis of local objectives?" Those engaged in MCT (N=4) said yes 2, and no 1. Those not engaged in MCT (N=22) said yes 20, and no 1.

Synthesis 6

One would expect consistency in this item and item 5. There is

not because none of the tests named appear to be tailored to school district objectives. One respondent did mention ETS--which may mean that the test used was developed by ETS, and may mean it was developed in response to local objectives. In general, one could infer that the respondents would like to have tests designed to local specifications.

Item 7

Item seven again asks for yes/no responses to questions. The first question refers to using MCT to determine high school graduation. Those engaged in MCT (N=4) report 2 yes, and 1 no. Those engaged in MCT (N=22) report 8 yes, and 7 no. The second question refers to using MCT for grade to grade promotion. Those engaged in MCT (N=4) report 0 yes, and 2 no. Those not engaged (N=22) report 5 yes, and 11 no.

Synthesis 7

The respondents seem to be about equally divided in their willingness to use MCT to determine high school graduation. The trend of response was clearly against using MCT to determine grade promotions.

Item 8

This item asks for a yes/no response to the question of excluding any students from MCT and allows an open response as to which would be excluded. Then there is a follow-up question relating to district offering of remedial instruction associated with MCT. The first question has the following response: those engaged in MCT responded 2 yes, and 1 no; those not engaged responded 9 yes, and 7 no.

The open response question about who will be excluded produced no data for those engaged in MCT. The only comment provided indicated that no one would be excluded and that all students would be assessed in grade 10. Those not engaged reported that EMR (R=1), Special Education (R=2, "Both"

(R=2) would be excluded.

The follow-up question related to remediation produced the following response: Those engaged in MCT said 3 yes, 0 no; those not engaged said 22 yes, 0 no.

Synthesis 8

A defensible inference from the data in item 8 is that both groups would exclude students from the test. Those students would be EMR and Special Education students. However, one respondent engaged in MCT noted that all would be assessed. So, the inferred generalization is not without exception. Both groups would provide remediation.

Item 9

This item provides a yes/no response to the question of retaking the test in the event of failure. The engaged group responded 3 yes, 0 no. The not engaged group responded 21 yes, 1 no. The follow-up question referred to the plan for re-testing. The response varied from three times to as many as desired. Other responses did not answer the question but referred to plans for remediation.

Synthesis 9

The data suggests all except one respondent would allow re-testing. At least one respondent would allow unlimited re-testing. Those respondents making comments about a plan for remediation seem to be responding to item 8 which refers to remediation. They may also be referring to re-testing to to be preceded by remediation.

Item 10

The purpose of this item was to explore how the school district reviewed the validity and bias of the tests. Part "a" of the item referred to bias. The districts engaged in MCT answered 3 yes, and 1 no in respect

to review for bias. The response to how this was accomplished indicated that the "test makers" did the review. The districts not engaged in MCT said 3 yes, 2 no for review for bias. The only response for how this was accomplished indicated that "ETS standardization process" was used.

Part "b" of this item asked if the tests were reviewed for predictive validity. Those districts engaged in MCT indicated 3 yes, 0 no. The review was reportedly accomplished by the test publishers. Those districts not engaged in MCT indicated 10 yes, 0 no. In respect to how this would be accomplished, the responses ranged (see the data for details) from "Research the Company has presented" to "Committee of supervisors and administrators will review tests selected."

Part "c" referred to review of the tests for content validity. Those districts engaged in MCT said 3 yes, 0 no. Reportedly this was accomplished by "test makers and supportive data". Those districts not engaged in MCT said 19 yes, 1 no, and reported that this would be accomplished by a variety of methods ranging from "committees" to an "ETS standardization process".

Synthesis 10

The data for those engaged in MCT seems consistent: 2 of the respondents reviewed for bias and 3 each for predictive and content validity. So, they conformed to the "good practice" suggested in the questionnaire preface to the item.

Those not engaged in MCT responded to the item in an inconsistent manner. The main unconsistency was the N difference for each part of the item: it ranged from 5 to 19. However, the respondents gave the responses which were cued by the item preface explaining "good practice." The open responses by both groups as to how the reviews were to be accomplished do

not seem to support the thesis that the respondents, as a group, understand the processes for determining the presence of bias, predictive validity and content validity.

Item 11

This item seeks to discover if the students would be notified of MCT. Those districts engaged in MCT all reported yes (R=3). They reported they gave such notice to parents of junior and senior high school students. Those districts not engaged in MCT reported 20 yes and 1 no. They reported they would give notice in various grade levels to students and to parents.

Item 12

This item is designed to determine pass-fail levels for MCT and was open ended in format. Those districts engaged in testing indicated "seventh grade", "70 per cent", and "diagnosed ability must be commensurate with achievement". Those districts not engaged in MCT gave four responses only two of which were substantive: "approved by board" and "70 per cent."

Synthesis 12

One assumption is that seventh grade and 70 per cent refer to level of performance on a test and as such would be "absolute" scores. The "commensurate with achievement" response would be a "floating" score.

Item 13

This item seeks information about how the curriculum would be related to the test. The respondents could answer yes/no, and if "no", they were to respond to an open question about how students would be prepared for the tests. Those engaged in MCT said 3 yes, 0 no, but no open response was reported by the "no" respondent. Those not engaged in MCT responded 19 yes, 1 no. Clearly, a safe generalization is that curricula would be,

or is, related to the test.

ITEM 14

This item tries to determine district statements about "credit" under the competency program. Those districts engaged in MCT said 1 yes, 2 no. Those responding yes were asked to provide a copy of the statement. None were provided. Those districts not engaged in MCT said 12 yes, 5 no, 4 did not know.

SYNTHESIS 14

Apparently one of the districts engaged in testing did not know how to respond and there was not solid agreement from the other districts on this matter. A safe inference would be that each district might well handle this matter differently.

ITEM 15

This item inquires into the nature of the planning of the MCT programs. Those districts engaged in MCT responded 3 yes, 0 no, and indicated that all the groups mentioned on the questionnaire were included in the committee. Those districts not engaged in MCT said 23 yes, 0 no--they would use a committee. Again, all the mentioned groups were represented. The only "others" mentioned were board members.

ITEM 16

This item seeks to determine if outside consultants were or would be used in developing a program. Those districts engaged in MCT say 1 yes, and 2 no. One was identified by the yes group. Those districts not engaged in MCT said 16 yes, and 4 no. As for who the consultants might be--they indicated State Department, College, Neighboring districts and others.

Synthesis 16

Since many of the respondents to a previous item, item 6, indicated they would want the test used to be developed according to local objectives, they probably would be hiring testing consultants to design the test. Thus, the response to this item is consistent with item 6.

Item 17

This item solicits information on who would determine the MCT program minimal competencies. Those engaged in MCT indicated that the MCT committee and the board of education would make the determination. Those not engaged gave a more diverse response ranging from teachers to the board of education.

Item 18

This item inquired into the date that respondents first heard about MCT. Those engaged in MCT responded in a wide range: "Right after Daniel Boone..." to 1972-3. Those not engaged responded similarly: from "years ago" to two years ago.

Item 19

This item seeks to determine what the respondents perceived as effects of MCT. Those engaged in MCT foresee both positive and negative effects. On the positive side one example is "some students will be more highly motivated to improve their skills." On the negative side one example is, "There will be criticism of schools when a number of students fail to pass the test." Those not engaged in MCT also foresaw positive and negative effects. See the data sheet for additional examples.

Questionnaire Conclusions

It is clear that few school districts are actually implementing minimal competency testing programs. Most are concerned enough to be involved in its study. Those who might institute MCT programs are aware of the need for extensive involvement by teachers, parent(s) and consultants in the development and maintenance of the testing program. Respondents also demonstrated by their divergent responses to most questionnaire items and their written questionnaires, that they are not in agreement about the definition of MCT, its placement in the K-12 sequence and its value in promoting educational progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the insights gained from a review of the recent literature related to Minimal Competency Testing and from the descriptive data gathered through the questionnaire, the Research Committee has generated a series of recommendations. The recommendations are presented with the understanding that the reader is familiar with the report in its entirety.

In addition, the recommendations are to be construed as those of the Committee alone; neither the chapter membership nor its leadership were consulted and they were not asked to support the recommendations. With that disclaimer, the members of the Research Committee believe that:

1. Any school district which chooses to implement a program of Minimal Competency Testing should have available for public scrutiny a position paper which discusses at least the following issues.

   a. The theoretical foundation of the program;

   b. The student and school liability for "failure" on minimum competency tests;

   c. The student population chosen for testing and for retesting in the event of failure to meet established competencies;

   d. The process used to develop the test or tests used to measure minimum competencies within the school district;

   e. The implications that administering the tests and the test data will have for the school district in respect to the students, curriculum and the community.

2. Any minimal competency tests should be developed by educators in a school district or group of contiguous districts. as a result, the probability of a match between pupil characteristics, instructional outcomes and test items will be increased.

3. Such tests be generated from a publically available analysis of the domain or content area which the test samples. This analysis should be developed by the school districts that use the test.

   Examples of appropriate analyses are task descriptions, learning hierarchies and various kinds of flow charts.

4. The analysis of the domain or content area is reflected in the design of instructional lessons and units to insure a match between what is taught and what is tested. This match should be at the appropriate level of learning, for the most part conceptual as opposed to mechanical.

5. Implementers of MCT Programs must provide interested persons with a written explanation of the process used to:

   a. demonstrate an acceptable level of test reliability

   b. demonstrate an acceptable level of test validity

   This explanation should extend beyond an uncritical acceptance of publisher's information.

6. Implementers should provide interested persons with a written explanation of the performance standards upon which tests are based. The explanation should include an evaluation of other standards which might have been used.
   - For example, is the standard a mastery or proficiency level? Is it an arbitrary cutoff score?

7. Students who do not achieve an acceptable score on a minimal competency test should be provided with:

   a. developmental assistance

   b. additional opportunities to achieve an acceptable score

8. Districts adopting MCT should at the same time design longitudinal, follow-up evaluation procedures to provide information concerning the decisions made as a result of testing. In this way, information can be acquired about the actual efficacy of minimal competency testing as an agent in bringing about educational improvement.

9. Schools which adopt MCT programs should reflect this approach in changes in school organization and management. These changes should be consistent with the MCT philosophy.
   - For example, one would expect to see courses reorganized, curricula restructured, marking systems altered, individualization of instruction instituted, etc.

APPENDIX A

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON MINIMAL COMPETENCY TESTING

Most of the literature dealing with minimal competency testing provides descriptions of programs and discussions of trends. Recently articles have appeared raising serious questions regarding trends and issues. The following entries are organized according to Programs, State of the Art, State Legislation, and Trends and Issues.

PROGRAMS

ACSA Special Report. Vol. 6, No. 3. January 1977, 13 pages. ED 132 739

Available from: Association of California School Administrators. 1575 Old Bayshore Highway, Burlingame, California 94010 Paper ($0.50)

Deals with minimum competencies graduation requirements as mandated by Hart Act (AB 3408) adopted by California to set up machinery in assessing minimal competencies. Author of the bill, Gary Hart, and Don McKinley, Chief Deputy to the Superintendent of public instruction deal with competencies in general; the remedial needs of desegregated minorities and learning for the handicapped students. Offers recommendations and suggestions to school districts for the identification of students that require remediation for attaining minimum competencies.

Acheson, Keith A. Developing Competency-based Graduation Requirements: Tips and Guidelines. Thrust for Educational Leadership, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 10-12, November 1975. EJ 137 181.

Practical guidelines and suggestions are given for school districts developing competencies for high school graduation. Article should help groups get started and avoid pitfalls. Deals with the difference between a competency and a performance indicator; the latter can be used in the assessment of competencies.

Adult Functional Competency: A Summary. University of Texas, Austin, Division of Extension, March 1975. 30 pages. ED 114 609.

Treats of developments and implementation devices for adult level performance with implications for elementary and secondary schools. Deals with identification of adult needs in general areas such as consumer economics, occupational knowledge; government and law; health and community resources; in communication and interpersonal relations; problem solving and computational skills.

Methodology gives suggestions for development of performance indicators; for assessment; specifies competencies; and gives national assessment of competency and field test and revisions. Three Adult Performance Levels are identified: that of functioning adults, adults functioning with difficulty, and adults functioning proficiently. Appendix includes materials on Adult Performance Level objectives, goals and tasks.

Anderson, Earl N. Coping with Oregon's New Competency-Based Graduation Requirements - View from a Practioner. April 1975. 13 pages. ED 105 574

Describes Oregon's newly mandated, state-wide competency-based program in grades K-12 of the public schools. At an early stage when evaluation remains elusive, a massive critical educational assessment takes place for the first time in 40 years. Paper presents further background information for launching the program. It identifies problem areas of implementation and cites the role of the consortium in approaching technical assistance to the local school districts.

Competency-Based Education Resource Guide. San Mateo Educational Resources Center, May 1977. 22 pages. ED 139 822.

Document was prepared as an emergency technique in answer to California's Hart Bill (AB 3408) which mandates local districts to establish minimal requirements and standards of proficiency in basic skills for students graduating from high school. San Mateo group made a search of ERIC and other files in an attempt to provide ready access to an existing undeveloped and unorganized body of related literature on competency-based education. Used materials from (SMERC) San Mateo Educational Resources Center and other materials related but which may be applied indirectly to competency-based education. Focus is placed on reading and language arts skills; on mathematical skills, but the document has not been limited to these curricular areas.

Competency-Based Education Source Book. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Available from: Mr. Jack McConnell, Director, Office of Marketing and Dissemination, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 3000 Market Street, N.E., Suite 323 Salem, Oregon.

Source book projects various listings of resources on competency-based education. Developed during the Summer of 1977 by Northwest Regional Education Laboratory. Materials are prepared under contract with the National Institute of Education (NIE).

Competencies Commission. Summary Report of the Commission. Berea School District. June 1977. 20 pages.

Available from: Competencies Commission, Dr. J.R. Andrisek, Superintendent, Berea District Schools, 390 Fair Street, Berea, Ohio 44017. (No price quoted)

Gives setting and background with goals of the program since 1975; organization and composition with a listing of Commission members; graduation and diploma requirements; research activities and recommendation of the Committee. Six major goals of the program are disclosed: identification of skills to be mastered; development of model to assess and diagnose needs in reading, functional skills, and mathematics competencies; study the feasibility of developing differential diplomas; graduation requirements and the implementation of differential diplomas for the present tenth-grade class, (1977-1978) for graduation in 1979-1980; articulation of competencies concept to total school community. The Program, the first in Ohio, aligns itself to

the national legislation outlined in Hr 9574 introduced by U.S. Congressman Ronald Mottl. Appendices include: Basic Competencies, Prediction Indicators and Objectives (as terms used interchangeably). Commission's work includes the development of definitions; development of the derivation of Adult Performance Skills as related to the Adult Performance Level Tests (APL) and the competencies grid of the district.

Estes, Gardy D. and others. A Criterion-Referenced Basic Skills Assessment Program in a Large City School System. April 1976. 20 pages. ED 124 587.

Describes a reading and mathematics program for Phoenix Union High School District. Treats of basic skills strategies and planning techniques. Validity and reliability of the test instruments are discussed. A sample criterion-referenced test development is cited - using the familiar route of item analysis.

Kiemig, Ruth Talbott. System for Integrating Reading into Content Areas, (SIRCA): An Earth Science Application. Paper presented at the 21st Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association at Anaheim, California.

Document examines system for integrating reading into earth science curriculum. Gives benefits of reading program and competency-based instruction in content courses; of reading and thinking competencies in earth science; of instructional, diagnostic, and remedial education through the conceptualization of objectives in the content courses. Reports of parents' students' and teachers' postive reaction to growth in science through competencies in reading. Strength lies in relating instructional tools of reading to content areas of curriculum.

Guide for an Assessment of Basic Life Skills. National Assessment of Educational Progress, May 1977. 56 pages. ED 139 819.

Areas of Basic Life Skills items are developed by (NAEP) for the evaluation of achievement of 17 year-olds in: 1) personal finance and consumer education; 2) health and interpersonal skills; 3) family responsibilities and career choices. Items can be used as a pool for instructional purposes, for school, classroom, or district assessment purposes. In Spring of 1978 NAEP projects the publishing of nationwide results of the foregoing items. Included also will be short description of item; a codified NAEP number for comparing results. Appendix lists objectives from which test items were constructed.

Nance, W.R. How Fares Competency Development in Oregon? Educational Leadership, Vol. 35, No. 2. pp. 102-105. November 1977.

Traces history and pros and cons of Oregon's implementation of statewide, mandated minimum requirements for high school graduation. Revisions from 1972 to date are presented. Oregon's requirements are encompassed in a paradigm envisioned in a three-legged stool, they are: units of credits, attendance, and competencies. For five years there have been revisions and modifications in the three areas in order to specify requirements for a high school diploma.

Neill, George W. The Reform of Intermediate and Secondary Education in California. Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 57, No. 6, p. 391-394. February 1976. EJ 130 984.

Deals with the report of the California State Commission on RISE (Reform of Intermediate and Secondary Education) project; and the tentative plan of the committee for its implementation. State proposal lists ten philosophic characteristics of an educated person and forms the basis for an educational reform goal: thirst for knowledge and life-long learning; to gain skills and find work success therein; respond to change with equanimity; regard for the environment and its maintenance; understand and appreciate all peoples and cultures; be able to read well, speak and write clearly, handle comfortably logical concepts and basic math skills; understand the rights and responsibilities of American system of government; understanding of human biology and psychology. Article gives strengths and weaknesses of the program. Personalized learning single, most important component of RISE project.

Polgar, Ellen. The High School Proficiency Exam. June 1976. 129 pp. ED 129 859.

(CHSPE) California High School Proficiency Examination allows an "early out" for all 16 or 17 year old students having parental permission and who pass exam. A legal diploma is awarded. Study discloses strong and weak points of "early out". Saves money for the state, but school districts have a budgetary disincentive. Students' choices for employment with such a certificate may be limited. Those passing exam, but staying in school may forego required courses and take easier and more pleasurable ones. Profile included of students who do take the CBSPE.

STATE OF THE ART

Clark, James F., and Thompson, Scott D Competency Tests and Graduation Requirements. National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1976 76 pp. ED 126 160.

Available from: NASSP, 1904 Association Drive, Reston, Va. 22091. (No price quoted)

Monograph addresses itself to: 1) assisting students and at the same time insisting that a diploma regain meaning; 2) the successful performance of certain competencies ordinarily held as an important component to course work and toward giving the diploma; 3) the use of a variety of specific competency tests to measure skill achievement needed for high school graduation. Document provides background for nationwide impetus toward the competency test movement in the areas of reading, math, writing, democratic processes, art, music and money. Appendices include list of states using competency tests and the states legislating their use.

. Minimal Competency Measurement Conference: Summary Report. March 1976. 74 pp. ED 127 376.

Several agencies, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the Education Commission of the States, (ECS), the Clearinghouse for Applied Performance Testing, (CAPT) and the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) cohosted a Minimal Competency Measurement Conference in Denver, Colorado. Thirty-two states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico were represented. Discussed are the general terms of minimal competency and the complex issues related to the area. The report gives a variety of topics that were loosely discussed and the trlated questions that arose.

. Walker, Decker F. Editorial: The Hard Lot of the Professional in a Reform Movement. Educational Leadership, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 83-85, November 1977.

Describes competency-based education as gathering momentum and appears to be next major reform movement. Impetus given to it by lay people and legislatures. Many professional educators are opposed and ask valid questions including: a definition of competency, and will the reform further segregate the students? Certain questions concerning humaneness in education also surface. Forces for competency-based education are stronger than those against it. Author warns that whether it is wanted or not, competency-based education will have to be coped with. Professional educator's role is to make something positive of the movement. All can support the movement's central aim: to help all young people attain the fundamental skills they need to function effectively. Professionals must work to replace the simplistic tenets of assessment with a constructive positive approach to public policy making; to work with local, state, and national groups to have public airing of pros and cons of competency based education in an atmosphere of working together to improve education and confidence in all.

. Competencies as an Aim to Education (Theme) Educational Leadership, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 83-142. November 1977.

The entire volume deals with material on, or related to the theme. Authors treat of educational competencies in general in the schools of the nation: in the States of Maryland, Oregon and Pennsylvania; and in the local district of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg of North Carolina and in the schools in the District of Columbia. Included are articles of special interest to bilingual educators; those of high school reform and that of aesthetic education.

STATE LEGISLATION

. Pipho, Chris. Minimal Competency Testing: A Look at State Standards. Educational Leadership, Vol. 34, No. 7, pp. 516-520. April 1977. EJ 158 735.

Deals with state legislation on required minimal competency standards for elementary and secondary schools. State requirements are listed for 16 states including: Arizona (1975), Delaware (1976), Florida (1975), (1976), Georgia (1976), Maryland (1975), (1976), Michigan (1976), Missouri (1976),

Nebraska (1975), New Jersey (1976), New York (1976), Oregon (1976), Vermont (1976), Virginia (1976), and Washington (1976). Certain reading, communications and mathematics skills appear more frequently as the minimal requirements of competency-based education for the above-named states. Some states tend toward government and the social aspects of life such as personal, family, money, consumer economics. Other states emphasize mastery and remediation until stipulated academic requirements are attained.

. Pipho, Chris. Update VII: Minimal Competency Testing. November 15, 1977, 39 pp.

Available from: Education Commission of the States (ECS), 300 Lincoln Tower, 1860 Lincoln Street, Denver, Colorado 80295.

By November 15, 1977, eleven states had enacted legislation and twenty state boards had adopted regulations. Activity is occurring in the other nineteen states at the local level, by state department study or legislative hearings.

Trends and Issues

. Bossone, Richard M. and Troyka, Lynn Quitman. National Conference on Minimum Competencies: Trends and Issues. Proceedings. 120 pp. ED 141 404.

City University of New York (CUNY), The Center for Advanced Study of Education (CASE) and the Board of Education of the City of New York co-sponsored a National Conference on Minimum Competencies on March 4, 1977. A discussion on trends and issues were in the six papers presented. The scope of the six papers give a general overview regarding minimal competencies.

. Brickell, Henry M. Seven Key Notes on Minimal Competency Testing, Education Commission of the States and National Institute of Education, October 1977, 12 pp.

Discusses seven policy questions that form a conceptual framework for considering minimal competency testing: 1) What competencies will you require? 2) How will you measure them? 3) When will you measure them? 4) How many minimums will you set? 5) How high will you set the minimums? 6) Will they be for schools or for students? 7) What will you do about the incompetent?

. Califano, Joseph A. Remarks before the College Entrance Examination Board HEW News, US Department of Health, Education and Welfare, October 1977, 25 pp.

Addresses two questions: 1) What are the proper uses of tests? 2) Should we have national tests and standards?

Clearinghouse for Applied Performance Testing Newsletter National Institute of Education, November 1977, Vol. III, Issue II. 13 pp.

Examines issues of minimum competency testing, particularly: 1) procedures, impact, legal issues; 2) current activities; 3) ECS/NIE

conference series; 4) competency and control in education; 5) applied performance testing - an issue of validity.

. McClung, Merle Steven. Competency Testing: Potential for Discrimination, Clearinghouse Review September 1977, 9 pp.

Discusses competency testing in Palm Beach County, Florida. Raises questions regarding validity of competency tests and racial discrimination.

. McClung, Merle Steven. Are Competency Testing Programs Fair? Legal? Phi Delta Kappan, February 1978, pp. 397-400.

Questions the equitability and legality of existing minimal competency testing programs. Discusses inadequate phase-in periods, inadequate match between test and instruction, racial discrimination, and model program provision.

. The Great American Dream, Education for Work? A Summary of the 10th Annual Meeting of the Education Commission of the States. May 1976. 50 pp. ED 128 348.

Available from: The Education Commission of the States. 300 Lincoln Tower Building, 1860 Lincoln Street, Denver, Cororado 80203. (No price quoted) ECS hard copy: ($2.06) plus postage.

Focus of meeting held by Education Commission of the States (ECS) was on ways to relate school to the arena of work. Modifications in education will be necessary if the states and localities continue toward career development and occupational goals. Summary deals with changes in administration, governance, curriculum and teaching strategies. Topics discussed were: federal aid vs. the states' role and that of the Education Commissioners at home; teacher evaluation; grants, bargaining and declining enrollments. Special interest sessions dealt with topics on: desegregation; Title IX; minimal competency; bilingual and bicultural education; and accreditation. Report includes implementation methods for problem areas and certain recommendations as identified by the participants.

. Thieleke, Gene A. Graduation Requirements: What are the Trends? Bloomfield Hills Public Schools Graduation Requirements, February 1976. 13 pp. ED 123 731.

Deals with graduation requirements for Bloomfield Hills Public Schools, Boulder County, Colorado. Gives credits required and competencies for grades 10-12. Minimum competencies are specified in each of 14 areas, including speaking and communication skills; measurement of employment and career; and finally, those dealing with health and physical fitness.

MEASUREMENT AND CONCEPTUAL IMPLICATIONS

. Glass, Gene V., Standards and Criteria Paper #10, Occasional Paper Series, Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, December 1977.

In this landmark paper, Dr. Glass documents deficiencies in measurement technology for the task of competency testing. Glass believes that the present dependence in so-called expert judgment is arbitrary. This practice deserves close scrutiny. Glass states he has been "literally dumbfounded" by the nonchalance with which measurement specialists and instructional development experts handle the standards problem.

. Green, Thomas F. "Minimal Educational Standards: A Systematic Perspective" Unpublished paper, 1978.

This paper discusses implications of the standards problem with particular emphasis on the problem of adequacy vs. excellence.

. Hambleton, Ronald K., Swaninathon, Harcharan; Algina, James and Coulson, Douglas Bill.

"Criterion-Referenced Testing and Measurement: A Review of Technical Issues and Developments," Review of Educational Research, Winter, 1978, Vol. 48, No. 1-48.

This article discusses the purposes uses, mastery classification systems, reliability, test development and validation as well as suggestions for further research related to criterion-referenced tests.

. McClung, Merle Steven and Pullin, Diana. "Competency Testing and Handicapped Students" Clearinghouse Review, March 1978.

This article focuses on fairness and legality of competency testing programs for the handicapped.

. Neill, Shirley Boes. The Competency Movement -- Problems and Solutions. Sacramento, California: Education News Service for American Association of School Administrators, 1978, 92 pgs.

A complete and lucid presentation of major issues, operational problems and current status of competency testing.

. Pipho, Chris, ed. "Minimum Competency Testing," Phi Delta Kappan, May 1978, Vol. 59, No. 9.

At least two dozen articles running the gamut of the current themes in the competency testing movement. Pipho, Briskell, Glass and Cawelti have updated past papers in their presentations.

. Spady, William G. Competency-Based Education: A bandwagon in Search of a Definition, Educational Researcher, Vol. 6, No. 1, January 1977, pp. 9-14.

An astute commentary about the state of the art stressing the unfortunate, but true, situation that a "conceptual house" was not put in order before the competency "bandwagon" took to the "highway." Spady urges improvement in operational definitions of such factors as outcomes, time frames, instruction, measurement, certification and program adaptability.

. State of Ohio, Department of Education "Public Forums on Minimum Competencies Set," School Slate, (February 1978) No. 368, p. 1-3.

This article details the procedures to be undertaken by state committee on mandate of the legislature. Public hearings have been scheduled to obtain input for policy recommendations to be made by a committee to be appointed by the State Board of Education.

Zieky, Michael J. and Livingston, Samuel O., Manual for Setting Standards on the Basic Skills Assessment Tests. Princeton, New Jersey: Educationsl Testing Service, 1977. 12 pgs.

This pamphlet describes methods of setting standards for mastery tests. The issue of soundness of such procedures is not addressed other than as generalizations about the "arbitrariness" of such attempts.

APPENDIX B

PHI DELTA KAPPA

Greater Cleveland Inter-University Council

- Research Committee-

As a service to our members and colleagues in this area, the Greater Cleveland Inter-University Council of Phi Delta Kappa is compiling information about minimal competency testing in the schools of Cuyahoga County. In addition, we are seeking input from school leaders about the competency testing movement in the schools.

Some districts have launched minimal competency testing programs Others are studying such possibilities. With new mandates from the state, all districts in Cuyahoga County will likely be involved to some extent in the immediate future.

We have attempted to design a questionnaire for all such possibilities. We will be pleased to provide you with a copy of our findings about this important issue. Please be assured that no district responding to this questionnaire will be identified in our report.

Please complete the questionnaire and return it in the attached postage paid envelope to Dr. Margaret Fleming, Chairman, Research Committee, c/o 1380 East Sixth Street, Cleveland, Ohio 44114.

Thank you for your co-operation. May we hear from you by February 1?

1. Which of the statements below most accurately describe the current status of your district's involvement in a minimal competency testing (MCT) program? (check one)

   a. 5 Not involved at all.

   b. 17 Involved in a study of issues prior to decision about a program.

   c. 1 Have decided to implement a program and are involved in planning future programs.

   d. 2 Involved in phasing in such a program.

   e. 1 Involved in administering such a program this year.

   f. 0 District has decided against a program.

   g. Other: To be determined by our study.

Predict (as with SHT) whether the student can at least get along adequately in meeting normal life situations - filling out forms, checking comparative prices, etc. Preparing such a test in Math - Grades 1-12 - will eventually reduce to Grades 4, 8, and 10.

If your district is not engaged in competency testing at this time, please complete questions in this series below:

2. If your district implements MCT, what do you feel the purposes would be? (Check any that apply.)

a. 11 To respond to public demand for accountability.

b. 11 To demonstrate attainment of measurable outcomes of public schooling.

c. 19 To identify needs of pupils and schools.

d. 19 To assess how well district and schools are equipping students with minimal skills.

e. 3 To determine levels of literacy.

f. 22 To assess effectiveness of instructional program.

g. 0 Other: _____

3. If your district had a MCT program, in which grades would competency tests be scheduled? (Check please.)

a. 0	Kindergarten	h. 3	grade 7
b. 2	grade 1	i. 15	grade 8
c. 6	grade 2	j. 4	grade 9
d. 7	grade 3	k. 7	grade 10
e. 10	grade 4	l. 9	grade 11
f. 7	grade 5	m. 7	grade 12
g. 9	grade 6		

We will (and do) monitor outcomes at all grade levels. Where we will administer specific tests has not been considered.
To be determined by the study.

If your district is engaged in competency testing at this time, please complete the questions in this series below:

2. What are the purposes of your district MCT program? (Check any that apply.)

a. 2 To respond to public demand for accountability.

b. 1 To demonstrate attainment of measurable outcomes of public schooling.

c. 3 To identify needs of pupils and schools.

d. 1 To assess how well district and schools are equipping students wi minimal skills.

e. 0 To determine levels of literacy.

f. 1 To assess effectiveness of instru tional program.

g. 0 Other: To insure that student's achievement in English and math ia commensurate with his/her ability.

3. If a program is or will be underway i your district, in which grade(s) will competency tests be administered? (Check please.)

a. 0	Kindergarten	h. 2	grade 7
b. 0	grade 1	i. 3	grade 8
c. 0	grade 2	j. 1	grade 9
d. 0	grade 3	k. 3	grade 10
e. 2	grade 4	l. 1	grade 11
f. 0	grade 5	m. 1	grade 12
g. 0	grade 6		

For districts not engaged in testing

4. What tests would your district select for *your* program? (Check any that apply.)

a. 19 Tests measuring basic skills such as reading or computational skills.

b. 14 Tests measuring life-role activities such as reading and responding to a want ad, balancing a check book and the like.

c. 8 Tests measuring subject matter knowledge as reflected in aptitude and achievement tests.

d. 2 Other:
Under study.

5. Please identify any commercially available tests that your district might consider. Please identify the test(s) and publisher(s).

. CTBS, etc.; Sharp (Reading) TOPIC
. (Math) CTB McGraw Hill;
. APL (Amer. College Testing)
. REAL (Cal. Press); Survival Skills in Reading & Math (SRA); Adult Basic Learning Exam (Psy. Corp.)
. Basic Skills Assessment (ETS)

(continued on back of page)

6. If your district would select a commercially available test, would it be developed on the basis of local objectives?

Yes 20 *No* 1

Please indicate the name of test and publisher below if you did not do so in No. 5 above.
. We have to be concerned with general as well as local objectives.

For districts engaged in testing

4. How would you describe the tests in your MCT program? (Check any that apply.)

a. 3 Tests measuring basic skills such as reading or computational skill

b. ___ Tests measuring life-role activit such as reading and responding t want ad, balancing a check book the like.

c. 1 Tests measuring subject matter knowledge as reflected in aptitu and achievement tests.

d. 0 Other:

5. Please identify any commercially available tests which you may have selected for your MCT program. Plea identify the test(s) and publisher(s

. Orbit from McGraw Hill
. Adult Performance Test ACT
. Col. Reading Achievement Test H.S.
. Metropolitan Achievement & Otis
. Lennon Mental Ability Tests - Grad
. Ohio Survey Grade 10.

6. If your district selected a commerci available test, was it developed on the basis of local objectives?

Yes 2 *No* 1

Please indicate the name of test and publisher below if you did not do so in No. 5 above.

For districts not engaged in testing

For districts engaged in testing

5. (First part continued)

   . Educational Testing Service (ETS)

   . Primary, CTB McGraw Hill

   . Five unsure at this time

   . Have not investigated this

   . Under Study

   . We would develop our own to measure our instructional program.

   . Not yet identified

For districts not engaged in testing

7. Would your district use competency tests to determine:

   High School Graduation
   Yes 8 No 7

   Grade to Grade Promotion
   Yes 5 No 11
   (See back of page)

8. Would your district exclude any students, such as EMR and LD students, from taking the tests?

   Yes 9 No 7

   If yes, which students?
   1-EMR; 2-Special Ed.; 2-Both
   1-as set forth in TEP (See back of page)

   If your district had MCT testing, would remedial instruction be provided as part of the program?

   Yes 22 No 0 0 Uncertain

9. If your district developed a MCT program, would students who fail have additional opportunities to pass the test?

   Yes 21 No 1

   If yes, please describe your anticipated plan in this event:

   . Remediation - retest at least 2-3 times.

   (See other side of page)

10. Good practice would dictate that MCT instruments should be verified for their predictive and content validity. In other words, do MCT instruments measure what they purport to measure (content validity); do MCT instrument scores predict future success on the job or in adult life with the competencies tested (predictive validity). In addition, checks for bias--racial, cultural, linguistic and otherwise should be made.

For districts engaged in testing

7. Will the results of the competency tests be used to determine:

   High School Graduation
   Yes 2 No 1

   Grade to Grade Promotion
   Yes 0 No 2

8. Are any students such as EMR and LD students, excluded from taking the tests?

   Yes 2 No 1

   If yes which students?
   . All students must have competency review in 10th grade.

   Will your district provide remedial instruction as part of the MCT program?

   Yes 3 No 0

9. Will students who fail have additional opportunities to pass the test?

   Yes 3 No 0

   If yes, please describe your plan in this event: They wil receive remediation by objective.
   . Each student will have as many opportunit as desired to pass test...once teacher fe student is ready they will be retested.
   . Through remedial reading, summer school, retesting. After prescribed courses are completed, a reassessment will take place

10. Good practice would dictate that MCT instruments should be verified for their predictive and content validity. In other words, do MCT instruments measure what they purport to measure (content validity); do MCT instrument scores predict future success on the job or in adult life with the competencies tested (predictive validity). In addition, checks for bias--racial, cultural, linguistic and otherwise should be made.

For districts not engaged in testing

For districts engaged in testing

7. (Part 1 continued)

. Not ready to answer
Under study

. Building to Building

. Uncertain

8. (Part 1 continued)

. Individual basis

. Students would be designated by a review committee for exceptions to testing

. Uncertain

9. (Part 1 continued)

. 3-not ready as yet

. Remedial individualized instruction and test rescheduled

. Based on degree of failure, various specific alternatives may be required

. No definite plan at this time

. Test would be given in first 9 weeks of the junior year approximately 6-9 weeks

. Remediation sessions would be given over junior and senior years and 6-retestings would be possible

. Test would also be available to be taken by graduates

. Three- not ready as yet

. Remedial individualized instruction and test rescheduled
. Summer School
. Students would be given at least three opportunities to take and pass test. They would receive remedial instruction
. Remedial course/work, reschedule tests in subsequent years...Senior High only at this point.
. Evening school, summer school, as well as learning lab for remediation.

For districts not engaged in testing

a. Were the tests reviewed for bias?
Yes 3 No 2

If yes, how was this accomplished?

. Used ETS standardization process
. Have not done, not ready yet
. Does not apply.

b. Were the tests reviewed or will they be reviewed for predictive validity?
Yes 10 No 0 Uncertain

If yes, how has predictive validity been (or how will it be) determined?

. By local objectives
. Only follow-up studies of graduates could accomplish this
. Research the company has presented

(Continued on back of page)

c. Would your district review the tests for content validity?
Yes 19 No 0

If yes, how do you believe this would be determined?

. By local objectives
. National, local experiences
. Not determined at this time - 2

(Continued on back of page)

11. Would provision for notice of competency testing be made to students?
Yes 20 No 1

If yes, in what grade(s) would such notice be provided?

. All grades 1-10 - Continuous
. 8th grade - before entry into sr. high
. All grades tested
. Whatever grades were tested - 2

(Continued on back of page)

For districts engaged in testing

a. Were the tests reviewed for bias?
Yes 3 No 1

If yes, how was this accomplished?

. By a local committee
. Through test makers' supportive data
. Publisher did this with adult sample

b. Were the tests reviewed or will they be reviewed for predictive validity?
Yes 3 No 0

If yes, how has predictive validity been (or how will it be) determined?

. Accomplished ACT & APC (in user's guide;
. Through test maker's supportive data, publisher
. We gave them to a sample of 8th graders.

c. Were the tests reviewed for content validity?
Yes 3 No 0

If yes, how has content validity been determined?

. Same process
. Through test makers and supportive data
. Accomplished ACT and SPC

11. Has provision for notice of competency testing been made to students?
Yes 3 No 0

If yes, in what grade(s) is such notice provided?

. 10th Grade
. Parents and students in junior and senior high were informed about the testing prog and of the graduation requirements.
. All grades (newsletter/public media/perso letters where applicable.
. General information to all students throu student council.
. All students would receive notice and reminder notices in September of each year beginning in Grade 2.

For districts not engaged in testing

For districts engaged in testing

10 b. (Part 1 continued)

. Comparison with other standardized evaluation instruments

. Panel of experts and regular follow-up

. Committee of supervisors and administrators will review tests selected

. Follow-up study will be made of graduates and students passing the tests

. Used ETS standardization process

10 c. (Part 1 continued)

. Committee of teachers and supervisors would study tests and report on their relevance for the curriculum

. Panel of experts

. Item analysis

. Comparison of instructional objectives

. Matching your pre-stated objectives

. Used ETS standardization process

11. (Part 1 continued)

. All grades 5, 8, 11
. All grades intermediate and above

. Parents at all levels, not determined

. Beginning of 11th grade, from junior high on.

For districts not engaged in testing

12. What level for cut-off (pass-fail) scores do you see as being appropriate for a MCT program? 65-70% Not yet known, would not have pass-fail scores. (continued on back of page)

13. Would your district ensure that current curricula provide instruction in topics covered by the test?
Yes 19 No 1

If no, what provision would be made to require that students be exposed to the knowledge and skills which will enable students to answer test questions?

. We were planning to test our own objectives; We plan to test Reading & Computation. We're assuming test will be "curriculum free." This type of test is no more designed to test curriculum than the SAT is.

14. Do you believe your district would establish specific outcome statements for determining credit under the competency program?
Yes 12 No 5 Uncertain 4

15. Would your district be organizing a committee to develop your program?
Yes 23 No 0

If yes, please check types of potential members:

a. 17 parents

b. 10 business, industrial or agency representatives

c. 20 teachers

d. 19 principals

e. 15 supervisors

f. 18 administrators

g. 19 counselors

h. 16 students

For districts engaged in testing

12. What level for cut-off (pass-fail) scores was set? 9th Grade

(continued on back of page)

13. Do current curricula provide instruction in topics covered by the test?
Yes 3 No 0

If no, what provision is being made to require that students be exposed to the knowledge and skills which will enable students to answer test questions?

14. Has your district established specific outcome statements for determining credit under the competency program?
Yes 1 No 2

If yes, would you append a sample of these statements.

15. Was a committee utilized in organizing your MCT program?
Yes 3 No 0

If yes, please check types of members:

a. 2 parents

b. 1 business, industrial or agency representatives

c. 4 teachers

d. 4 principals

e. 1 supervisors

f. 3 administrators

g. 4 counselors

h. 1 students

For districts not engaged in testing	For districts engaged in testing
12. (continued)	12 (continued)
. Recommended by advising Committee and approved by board	. Diagnosed ability must be commensurate with achievement.
. Not determined	. 7th Grade
. 70 per cent level of accuracy	. 70 per cent
. In process of development	

For districts not engaged in testing

i. 2 others: Residents
. Non-parent; Parents & Residents could bring viewpoints of business; Board Members

16. Would your district consider securing consultants in developing your program?
Yes 16 No 4 Uncertain 0

If yes, please identify possible consultants you would choose:
. Someone who has had direct experience
(continued on back of page)

17. Who do you see determining the minimal competencies if your district had such a program?

(continued on back of page)

18. When did you first hear about competency testing?

(continued on back of page)

19. Competency-based testing raises many far-reaching issues. What effects do you foresee?

. Teacher teaching toward tests will stifle creativity
. Will help slower students
. Will hinder better students
. Cause ability grouping
. Will revive comparisons of districts
. Some harmful effects if the tests purport to do more than they are capable. An education is 13 years of extensive experiences--not a cram course preparing for 1 type exam.

(continued on page 57)

For districts engaged in testing

i. ____ others: ____

16. Were consultants secured to assist in developing your program?
Yes 1 No 2

If yes, please identify:

. Dr. Irv. Wilson, McGraw Hill

17. Who determined the minimal competencies for your program?

. Committee mentioned above
. Committee and Board of Education
. Competencies Committee recommended to the Board of Education.

18. When did you first hear about competency testing?
. NEO ASCD -- April, 1977
(continued on back of page)

19. Competency-based testing raises many far-reaching issues. What effects do you foresee?

. Each school district has unique needs It would be counter-productive to force all districts into the same MCT Plan. Our plan was tailored to our students and their needs and career aspirations.
. A problem may arise with the repeated failure.

(continued on page 57)

Person completing questionnaire: ____

Title: ____

District: ____

Please be assured that no district will be identified in this study.

Please feel free to add comments.

For districts not engaged in testing

16. (continued)

. Depending on finances

. Colleges in area, ETS, Westinghouse

. Not yet known, do not know.

. Only if needed

. State Department
. Colleges, Educ., Research Council
. Central Office
. Curriculum Specialists
. Neighboring Districts
. Not determined

17. (continued)

. Local staff & administrators cooperate
. Board of Education based on administrative recommendations or legislative action
. Staff - 2; Education
. Board of Education - based on staff recommendations
. Curriculum
. Not yet known
. Administrators of school district
. Board of Education Policy
. Advisory Committee & Board of Education
. Teachers
. Educators
. Department of Instruction
. Joint Decision
. Committee of Teachers, supervisors, administrators, parents, principals, counselors, business reresentatives
. Superintendent
. Central Curriculum Committee

18. (continued)

. Several years ago
. 1-1/2 years ago
. 1976
. Six years ago
. Started on objective based testing
. Program - 1973
. Early 70's
. Four years ago
. Two years ago
. Twenty-five years ago
. Three-four years ago
. Spring 1976
. 1950
. years ago

For districts engaged in testing

18. (continued)

. 1972-1973
. Right after D. Boone came through
. 1970

For districts not engaged in testing

19. (continued from page 56a)

. All curricular areas should be considered basic if they exist.
. A curriculum with more emphasis on basics and practical application
. If widely adopted, many instructional methods and strategies will be changed. This will change the instructional program.

As proposed by State:
- . Forcing more students out of school
- . Diminishing of the ofjective of providing a program that meets the needs of all your students
- . Early graduation of those who pass the competency test early
- . Confusion as to "what is important" for instructional programs
- . School systems and students finding "ways around the test"

It could become too narrow and specific.

There are already too many tests being administered to pupils.

. Elite Education
. Test Teaching
. More involvement in education by state and federal government
. Organized review of instructional program.
. Increased surveillance/close monitoring of instructional programs
. Increased emphasis upon follow-up remedial programs as they relate to current needs of students.
. Increased emphasis on prescription learning - individualized instruction.

. Teaching for test
. Early graduation
. Inservice, money
. Explanatory meetings for parents and students
. State mandated legislation without consideration for local implementation
. Special programs for those who do not attain minimum life skills
. Selling program to the community

For districts engaged in testing

19. (continued from page 56a)

. There will be criticism of schools when a number of students fail to pass the test.

. Some students will be more highly motivated to improve their skills.

. Educational programs will be geared more directly to the needs of students.

. Learning objectives will be more precise for at least the minimal skill and knowledge areas.